

THE

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Issue





# THE WESLEYAN



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## The Dragon's Lament

### Prologue

(The coming and the passing of Hreginald, the Dragons' primeval hero and ancestor of Hroderic.)

Lo! we have listened to many a lay  
 Of the Dragons' flame, their splendor of old,  
 Their mighty warriors, and martial deeds!  
 The hero of all was Hreginald bold,  
 The fire-drakes' savior. He came to the Dragons  
 When they were sore pressed, beset on all sides  
 By the monstrous giants who hated all men  
 And bore the curse of the seed of Cain.  
 Hreginald came in a time of woe,  
 Came in a strange and wondrous way,  
 In a great golden egg encrusted with gems  
 Which was borne on the wings of six ebony birds  
 Who departed in flame, leaving friendless the foundling.  
 He grew to a terror as time brought change  
 And led the scale-snakes against their foe,  
 Slaughtering all excepting a few  
 Who escaped to wreak havoc in lives of men  
 For some hundred years hence. The giants were defeated.

15. *scale-snakes*. A "kenning" (simple figure of speech). The Anglo-Dragon literature has several notable kennings.

*Still Hreginald led the Dragons wisely*  
*And counselled them well. Then his hour struck,* 20  
*And Hreginald passed on to the peace of God.*  
*At his death the Dragons built high a barrow*  
*And placed him upon it. Weeping with woe*  
*And beating their wings, they breathed upon it*  
*And set it on fire. As the flames caressed him* 25  
*The land was darkened; six ebony birds*  
*Circled the barrow, were consumed in the flames.*  
*And the Dragons wondered from what far haven*  
*Bold Hreginald came, to lead them to greatness.*

## 1.

*(The treasure in the barrow, and how the Dragon came  
 to guard it.)*

*The minds of men are strange and singular.* 30  
*They do not realize where danger lies;*  
*For gold is hidden in the earth,*  
*And hidden things should not be found.*  
*Yet men dig for gold and precious metals,*  
*Form them into wondrous shapes,* 35  
*Heat them red and hammer them thin,*  
*Shape them fine and stud with gems*  
*And never see the fateful truth:*  
*That hid things should not be found,*  
*That gold can wreck the lives of men.* 40  
*Thus it is that the Dragons' task*  
*Is to guard gold treasures, allow no man*  
*To harm himself with foolish gold,*  
*The Dragons nobly save man from himself! . . .*

*Thus it was* 45

*That an evil treasure was found unguarded*  
*By a virtuous Dragon enveloped in flame,*  
*A descendant of Hreginald, flying in darkness*  
*Haunting the barrows; a blessing that brings*  
*A need service to the dwellers of earth.* 50  
*His wont was to haunt out a hoard underground*  
*And guard heathen gold, growing old with the years.*  
*But no whit for that is his fortune more fair!*  
*This Dragon was Hroderic, grand-nephew of Hreginald,* 54  
*Famed of his people for courage and strength.*

44. *himself! . . .* Omitted here are several didactic remarks about how man should follow the wise examples set him by the Dragons, who care naught for gold, etc., etc.

54. *grand-nephew.* Note the uncle-nephew relationship, so important in the heroic epic.



For three hundred years this protector of people  
 Held the huge treasure-hall under the earth.  
 The barrow was stone, hung with grey moulds,  
 The water dripped down from the arch overhead,  
 Formed pools on the floor. The susurus beat 60  
 Constantly, ceaselessly, for three hundred years  
 And Hroderic grew old. His bones gathered dampness  
 And the flames of his belly grew damp and cold.  
 One night as he slept in the dank, dark hide-hole  
 A guilty fugitive forced his way in, 65  
 And, seeing a flagon of evil gold,  
 Took it in silence and bore to his master,  
 Imploring his lord for a compact of peace.  
 Then Hroderic woke from his troubled sleep  
 And discovered the theft. In sadness he thought 70  
 Of the sorrow 'twould bring; but he knew his duty.  
 He went from the barrow, flew silently out,  
 And scourged the lands of the robbers tribe;  
 Not in anger he did this, for his heart was heavy;  
 Not anger but warning caused him to act; 75  
 Not in anger, but sorrow, he returned to the cave,  
 Knowing that death might be courting him soon.

## 2.

(The coming of Beowulf. Beowulf makes his boast.)

The Dragon waited, filled with foreboding.  
 But no fear was within him; he knew death would come  
 At some time in the too-swift march of the years 80  
 As it comes to all. And so he waited —  
 For death or life, he knew not which;  
 He only knew that death would visit  
 One who fought on the field that day.  
 He knew much sadness at the thought of killing  
 A man, whom he was supposed to protect;  
 But he knew if a man were to know death's blade  
 'Twere better so, for one man to die  
 Than the scourge of the gold descend upon many.  
 Then he saw a warrior approaching, 90  
 Chief of the countryside, coming for vengeance.

93. *unwitting revenger*. This obscure reference concerns one of the most noteworthy dirges in Anglo-Dragon literature, in which the story is told of Hroderic's father, who battled the giant Grendel, one of those who had escaped from the Dragon's scourge under Hreginald. Hroderic's father was killed, but died a noble death. Grendel, the giant, was later reported to have been slain by Beowulf.



*The Dragon's heart pained him, for this was Beowulf,  
Unwitting revenger of Hroderic's father.*

*Beowulf briefly uttered his boast*

*And the Dragon listened, and listened, and listened,*

95

*And dozed, and listened again. Then Beowulf*

*Shouted a challenge; lumbering slowly,*

*Hroderic gathered himself and went forth.*

3.

(The fight begins. It goes hard with Hroderic. Beowulf receives aid,  
and Hroderic is killed.)

*The fight began. Hroderic fought bravely and well*

*But the Fates were against him.*

100

*His powerful breath was dimmed by the chill,*

*The furnace within him was dampened and cold.*

*His scales had weakened, his natural armor*

*Had fallen prey to the air of the barrow.*

*He summoned his courage and called upon God,*

105

*And received some succor. Beowulf, clumsy*

*And careless from victory, swung high his sword*

*And missed the mark. The sword came crashing*

*Upon the stones and split in twain.*

*But Beowulf rallied and drew forth his dagger;*

110

*For the Dragon, so weakened, this was enough.*

*Then a comrade of Beowulf, fleeing in terror,*

*Saw his master was winning, and hurried to aid him.*

*With two against him Hroderic was lost,*

*But with courage unshaken he made his last act*

115

*And sank his teeth in the throat of his foe*

*Even as the blade bit deep in his own.*

*Thus Hroderic died; but as a companion,*

*In the halls of death Beowulf joined him.*

*But Hroderic's purpose, his passport to death,*

120

*Was not in vain, for the evil treasure*

*Was burned with the body of Ecktheow's son.*

*The Dragon, who bravely had tried to protect them,*

*The Geats cast downward into the sea,*

*But friendly nicors, who guard the deep,*

125

*Recovered his body and carried it back*

*To the land of the Dragons. There in all honor*

*Hroderic was taken, and mourned with all majesty.*

*Thus one more of their tribe was slaughtered by man,*

*But still they continued their noble task.*

130

Polly Lyell Rodieck



# Weihnachten

BY HARRIET HOPE

The little man's name was Hans. He was a German and an alien who stood playing his violin before a darkened department store in Paris on a Christmas Eve night. The large boulevard in front of him stretched with majesty into an incumbering blackness at either end and its bordering sidewalks filled and emptied with people. To the man who was shaping longing into music and sending it out to deaf ears of passersby, the slabs of concrete seemed raw and dead.

He played because he knew of no other work to do and he had not eaten in three days. The last meal was given him by a stingy cafe owner's wife in back of her dirty establishment and had been only a rank bowl of pottage poured over crumbled bread. Now his cheeks hollowed out and the white hair hung in thin strands around his face. He wore a coat of black wool, ragged, but carefully patched where the places might show and he had pulled a muffler of the palest yellow around his throat. From time to time he stopped, tensing his fragile body against the protection of the door corner. His fingers were restless, like the wings of some encaged bird, and he clinched them into balls inside his coat pockets to make them still.

He came of blond German stock with a face made from the timeless quality that grows old but never ages. His eyes were a blue softness that searched in a calm, sad way among the faces of the street. In them was a song, straining to make itself heard; a melody of people, of laughter, of Christmas trees with bright decorations. It was of men alive with *Dichtung*, the poetry of his land.

Hans held his violin as a child holds an animal. It was an interfused part of his body and swelled into being a pregnant history of sadness and unreachd beauty. It was a person who lived and breathed and he caressed the sides like a tender lover. His hands picked up the bow and drew it across the strings, while he cursed himself for being able to produce only a thin ghost of the rich chords he imagined.

Giselle had been watching the man for several nights. She knew what time he came and how long he would be there. She knew he was hungry and sad and she felt pity for him. She hated her pity because she thought it a child's weakness and because it was for him, a stranger. The first time she had seen him there the pain in her heart had been so great that she could not sleep. He was like a terrible, frightening dream of the world's loneliness that rose up before her in a phantom shape and she was too young to analyze the meaning. But she had come again to see his face, to see the mild, gentle eyes that searched the crowded sidewalks for understanding.



At six she had begun violin lessons and she was fourteen now. Inside her burned a dream of fame and wild restless music. She ached to free it, to put it into vibrant motion before the eyes of the world, and she understood the man. Yesterday she had planned to bring him food, but when the moment came she lacked courage so that now she was empty handed. With a desperate gesture she put the medal which hung around her neck on a thin, silver chain to her mouth and bit it, waiting for inspiration. Always, always before, during her long hours of practice, she would finger the medal and concentrate until the surge inside her came pouring out for release, but now she stood mute.

Hans did not see the girl until she was almost in front of him. Then he was startled and stopped playing because his hands had begun to shake. He waited, silent, for her to move but she seemed frozen. When she at last spoke the words were so low and fast he hardly caught them.

"I don't have any money, nor any food to give you." She turned as if she were afraid someone else on the street would notice her standing there and went on more rapidly.

"I play the violin too, and I watched you. I knew what you were trying to say, because I, I too . . . wait . . . here, take this."

She unclasped the chain from around her neck and put it into his hand, then turned and lost herself in the nameless sea of people.

Hans examined the warm object in his palm. It was a tiny, round piece of silver, etched with the faces of Virgin and child. On the edges were marks where teeth had bitten into the hard surface, nearly erasing one line of the Virgin's shoulder. He looked down the street, tightly clutching the medal against the hard fabric of his coat, but nowhere, nowhere could he find the girl who had given him Christmas.

## IF

*If I were a social butterfly,*

*Indeed, so gracious would be I.*

*I would know just what to wear,*

*And how to keep so neat my hair.*

*My figure, it would be supreme,*

*My mannerisms, of a queen.*

*Oh, I would really have the poise,*

*And my friends? (They'd be all boys! !)*

Connie Newmann



# They Never Knew

BY CARMEN MOORE

They never knew and she was glad. She was glad of the memory they must have carried with them as they left school on graduation day — the memory of her standing there — tall, stately and strong.

She stood on the steps of the high school auditorium. Several minutes elapsed before she realized that she was still waving her hand. She had been watching the seniors eagerly boarding the bus which was to take them on their last class trip. They had gone now — gone to New York — and gone into a new world which was to be theirs.

"Morning, Miss Crawford. A right pretty graduating exercise, eh?"

She nodded. "Yes, it was, Mr. Thompson. It was very wonderful, I think."

"Well, be seeing you, Ma'am." He tipped his hat and walked away from her.

She chuckled to herself. Mr. Thompson had looked at her strangely. She guessed that she must have looked pretty queer, standing there waving to the air — a far-away look in her eyes.

She looked around her. All the proud parents were still standing there talking — the daddies in their best suits, their chests thrown-out, their hands in their pockets — standing there as if they owned Main Street. And every mother, dressed as if it were Easter, was hugging first one lady and then another as she collected belated graduation gifts for her child. And little sisters and brothers pulled at their mother's dress, tired after having to sit through a long drawn-out program — their feelings hurt because their daddy had given them disconcerting looks when he saw them point their finger and say, "That's my sister. Hey, sister! Isn't my sister pretty?" Aunts and uncles and grandpas and grandmas were there too, happy because they had seen their relative receive graduation honors.

Mr. Townsend called to her. "Well, I don't know what Johnny is going to do next year, Miss Crawford, when he goes to the university. Don't know what he's going to do when he's treated like he was just another number. What'll happen when that boy of mine needs a good pushing without you there to tell him he's got to buckle down to work? He's so used to coming to you when he gets discouraged. You always made him feel like you were interested in him personally. You gave him the incentive to try and not give up. You know his mother and I are grateful to you, Miss Crawford. Aren't we, Sara?"

Sara extended her hand in a warm handclasp. "Miss Crawford, I can't find the proper words to tell you how we feel. I guess you know, though. Thank you. Thank you for everything."



There was much that she would have liked to say to Sara, only she couldn't find the words, either. She could only squeeze the woman's hand and say, "You have a fine son. It was a joy for me to have him."

And she passed on through the chattering crowd which was slowly dispersing. She heard the loud voice of Mrs. Louderdale. "A fine bunch of boys and girls! The town won't be the same without 'em — some of them going off to college or into the Army, some gallivanting to Atlanta to work. And to think that some of these girls — these *children* — are getting married! My word! When I was a girl, my parents —"

She had almost reached the top of the steps when she felt a tap on her shoulder. Turning around, she saw a mother whose name she couldn't remember. "Sandra's going to miss you, Miss Crawford. She talks about you a lot at home. She'll really miss you."

She knew that it was rude, but she couldn't help it. She couldn't stand there and talk to the lady. She couldn't stand there and talk about those wonderful boys and girls to another person. Thus, she merely smiled at the lady; then climbed the last step.

Oh! She had made it. Her office was over to the right. Just a few more steps. She was away — away from all the happy excitement.

The boys and girls miss *her*? Well, she guessed that they would in a very nonchalant way. Some of them, no doubt, would be back to see her. She would keep in contact with them through their parents and through reading the local newspaper. But no longer did they belong to her. They were gone. It didn't seem right to her. She got so attached to them, loved them, gave them her time and efforts, laughed with them over their funny experiences, shared with them their joys, comforted them over their disappointments. And then, suddenly, one day they're gone. They were snatched away, it seemed to her, almost like a baby is snatched from his mother.

With that thought in mind she felt the tears stinging her face. A sob caught in her throat. But they hadn't known and she was glad. They hadn't known that she wasn't always tall, stately, and strong. They hadn't known that, like them, she, too, sometimes felt little and insignificant. They hadn't known that she sometimes shed tears, too. She wasn't always strong. But these boys and girls hadn't known this. She was glad.

She straightened her shoulders. She'd better get busy. She had a meeting in two hours with the new officers of student government. She'd better get busy. There was much to do.

She opened the door to her office — the one with the sign "Louise Crawford, Principal."

## DORM

*It takes a heap o' heapin' t' make a dormitory  
room,  
A heap o' noise and clatter, an' ye never have to  
roam  
Afore ye really 'preciate the home ye lef'  
behind,  
An' hunger fer it somehow, with it allus  
on yer mind.  
It don't make no differunce how poor ye get  
t' be,  
How much yer books and papers cost, how great  
yer poverty;  
It ain't home t' ye, though it sometimes  
seems t' bring  
The feelin' that yer clothes is sort o' wrapped round  
everything.  
A dorm ain't a place where dust can hide or vanish  
in a minute;  
Afore it's a dorm there's got t' be a heap o' heapin'  
in it;  
Within the walls there's got t' be some roaches  
born, and then  
Right there and then ye've got t' get the flit gun  
after them  
And gradjerly, as time goes on, ye find ye  
cannot part  
With anything yer roommate's used — they've grown into  
yer heart:  
The old cake tins, the call-downs too, that old  
corsage she wore  
Ye hoard; but, if ye could, ye'd sweep the ashes  
off the floor.  
Ye've got t' weep t' flunk a test, ye've got t'  
sit an' sigh  
An' throw a book at yer roommate's head, an' hope  
that Death is nigh;  
An' in the stillness o' the night t' see the  
monitor come,  
An' close the mouth o' her that laughed, an' leave  
her sweet voice dumb.  
Fer these are scenes that grip the heart, an'  
when yer bones are tired,*



*Ye find that home is dearer than it was, an'*  
*sanctified;*  
*An' tuggin' at ye always are unpleasant*  
*memories*  
*Of a quiz ye did not study for — ye can't escape*  
*from "D's".*  
*Ye've got t' wash yer socks fer years, ye've got*  
*t' iron all day,*  
*An' learn t' loathe the clothes ye have by wearin' 'em*  
*each day:*  
*Even the ants around the sink must blossom*  
*year by year*  
*Afore they 'come a part o' ye, suggestin'*  
*someone near*  
*Who loves t' watch 'em crawl along, and trains 'em*  
*jes' t' run*  
*Into the sink, (the little dears), and drowns 'em*  
*one by one.*  
*Ye've got t' heap each chair an' bed with heaps an'*  
*heaps o' stuffs*  
*'Cause somehow, in the closets, there's never room*  
*enough.*

—Helen Poole

## Ghost Phantasy

*They come in the night . . . silently . . .*  
*blown in upon the wind . . veiled by swirling mist . .*  
*and dance . . Lord, how they dance! . . .*  
*bending to the tune plucked from the muted trees.*  
*The moon drives them mad . . .*  
*and their eyes burn red like coals . .*  
*and they moan with each rustle of wind in the grass . .*  
*flitting away . .*  
*like the scale of a maddened flute;*  
*haunted ones these . . nameless . .*  
*swaying with the throb of the wind . .*  
*blown here and there like filmy wisps of smoke.*  
*Blood red the moon! No wonder that they dance!*  
*I'd dance if I were . . . . .*  
**EEOOWWW! NO DON'T!**  
**DON'T TAKE THE MOON AWAY!**

Charlye Wiggins

# Sunbonnets for Barbara

BY ANNE CROOM

She flung herself despondently into the sunny yellow room, her very own since her sister had married and left four years ago. Collapsing onto the cheery sunbonnet-girl spread, she abandoned herself to a flood of hot tears.

"How *could* he!" she wailed. "I'll die — I'll just simply fade away and die!"

The happy figures on the spread mocked her. Oh, how she hated them. And everything. And everybody. Fiercely she jabbed the yellow dotted one, which remained smiling in utter indifference to her wrath. Barbara flipped disdainfully over on her back, smothering her adversary, and stared in abject misery at the ceiling.

Inspired by the brightness of the ceiling, the thought flashed briefly into her mind. "Maybe he didn't mean to. Maybe he tried to find me and couldn't. Maybe . . ."

Dismal remembrance clouded over that happy possibility. He had seen her, and he had callously ignored her. Oh, the unspeakable cad. Of all loathsome creatures. How she detested him, despised his very looks, abhorred the thought of his slimey old charm. And—(what was that word Miss Fowler mentioned in English today?) abominated. Oh, yes — he was absolutely, one hundred percent *abominable*, just plain ole abominable. She savored the word, caressing it with her tongue. "He undoubtedly wouldn't even know what it meant." (This said with all the scorn she could muster.)

"Perhaps," she mused, "I should be a writer, or a great scholar. I could live in New York — in one of those quaint little village houses. I should be quite bohemian — only two or three full-time servants. And all the great people, presidents, philosophers, and all would wait in line to confer with me. And I would brush scornfully aside all the masses of men trailing me . . ."

With this proud fancy came the crushing realization that, at the most vital moment in her life, (now), she had not even ONE male to brush carelessly aside. In fact, oh miserable inconstancy! the one male she thought to be hers had just finished brushing her aside!

Oh gall! Oh bitter gall! She who had been so vibrantly alive was now so desperately dying. For surely she was dying. Never again to see the bright light of day — doomed to utter, utter, positive ruin.

"Oh," she wailed from the very depths of her despair, "I'm so humiliated!" And to face the crowd in English tomorrow — oh, better far to die, to simply fade away now.

The yellow, sunbonnet girls, smiling tolerantly, seemed to murmur, "Yes dear, we know. But tomorrow . . ."



Indignant glares failed to squelch them. "But you don't understand!" she moaned desperately. "Can't you see, I'm ruined, a social flop. A has-been, a castaway! Ruined, Ruined, forever Ruined! "Oh, why can't I just die?"

Gently, after the latest floor of tears had subsided, and the last hot salt drop squeezed out, a glimmering of consolation slipped past her mental fortresses (for she was firmly determined to pass away in quiet agony) soothing, yes, even boosting her drooping spirits. The solution was really quite simple. She fondly eyed at the serene Miss Sunbonnets, her inspiration. Yes, theirs was the superior attitude. She would recover her poise. She would mingle with the crowd, chatter with them of the petty inconsequentialities so vital to their untried souls (such insignificant trivialities as dates, movies, "steadies," clothes, and boys). Yet, somehow, she herself would be on a slightly higher plane. For was she not quite superior? Had she not suffered? Had not her heart been irrevocably shattered, exposing her to the pangs of misery, plunging her into unplumbed depths of sorrow? But she would be brave. She would elevate herself from the shadows, push herself into the glaring sunshine, and force herself to hear their empty, shallow laughter. Her courage would awe them all. Barbara tossed her head triumphantly at the yellow dotted figures.

And the sunbonnet maids still smiled.

## The Searching

*Always now there is the searching,  
The searching . . . Fumble, grope,  
For one small thing,  
For something, for anything  
To hold . . .*

*A beginning of understanding . . .*

*A thought that is true . . .*

*A friend, perhaps (for . . .*

*Is there anything,*

*Anything,*

*That can bring deeper misery than  
Loneliness?)*

*Something . . . something.*

*To lead the way to certainty.*

*Always now there is the searching.*

Polly Lyell Rodieck



# The Blue Madonna

BY CHARLYE WIGGINS



## CHARACTERS

1. Vanya Christina — niece of Mrs. Perkins.
2. Mrs. Lavinia Perkins — the nervous puttering aunt with the warm heart.
3. Miss Chester — stout, snobbish windbag who usually thinks the worst of everyone.
4. Bill Baxter — plain, average young boy; a salesman.
5. Mr. Hogan — the gnome-like old man with a terrible temper but a heart as big as the state of Texas.
6. Keith Lamonte — the artist mystery-man of fantasy.

## SCENE I

THE TOWN OF LYNDEN WHERE A UNIVERSITY IS THE CENTER OF ATTRACTION. THE WEST SIDE OF TOWN, MRS. PERKINS' BOARDING HOUSE: THE LIVING ROOM. THE TIME IS LATE SPRING. THE PRESENT, ON A MONDAY EVENING.

THE ROOM ITSELF IS SPARINGLY FURNISHED WITH A FADED OLD SOFA, A ROCKING CHAIR, A WORN MORRIS CHAIR WITH THE SPRINGS SAGGING AND A TABLE BESIDE

IT, A FLOOR LAMP, AND A DESK. THERE IS A FIREPLACE ON ONE SIDE OF THE ROOM WITH A HASSECK BESIDE IT, AND DOZENS OF GREEN PLANTS GROWING EVERYWHERE, MANY OF THEM GERANIUMS. THE ROOM IS COMFORTABLE BUT WORN WITH YEARS OF LIVING.

AS THE CURTAINS OPEN, IT IS ABOUT 8'O'CLOCK ON MONDAY EVENING. MRS. PERKINS IS SERVING TEA AND COOKIES. MISS CHESTER, A BOARDER, AND MR. HOGAN, ANOTHER BOARDER, ARE SITTING ANXIOUSLY EXPECTANT IN THEIR CHAIRS. MR. HOGAN IS WEARING HIS HAT AND COAT, AND IS SMOKING A CIGAR.

MRS. PERKINS (SERVING TEA TO EACH OF THEM): You know, I really do love tea in the spring. I really do. It cures what ails you. Now, in the winter, I like coffee better. It's thicker . . . seems to warm the blood more . . . but in the spring, I always like tea best. I really don't know what good its does, and sometimes I think to myself that it's all my way of thinking . . and not really the way it is at all . . .

MR. HOGAN: Now Lavinia . . . get a hold on yourself. You're rattling like two loose dishes in an electric dishwasher. I'm sure you didn't call us together and serve tea just to discuss the merits of a decent beverage. What's on your mind? (PUFFS ON CIGAR.)

MRS. PERKINS (WRINGS HANDS NERVOUSLY, FROWNS, AND BEGINS TO PACE THE FLOOR IN A FLUTTERY, EXCITED WAY.): Well . . . I . . . I hardly know how to begin this. I've never had to do anything of the sort before . . .

MISS CHESTER (SIPPING TEA): Now lovey, you know we always pull together in a crisis. (PAUSE) What's wrong . . . has young Baxter been taking a woman to his room?

HOGAN ROARS WITH LAUGHTER.

MRS. PERKINS (NERVOUSLY): Oh my no . . . it has nothing to do with young Billy. He's such a fine boy . . .

MR. HOGAN: For God's sake, get on with it, Lavinia, or we'll be up all night. But sit down and quit your walking around. You're making me fidgety. (WAVES HER TO A CHAIR.)

MRS. PERKINS (BACKING UP TO PERCH ON THE EDGE OF A CHAIR): It's my niece . . . it's Vanya . . .

MISS CHESTER (AGHAST): Vanya! My goodness! Is the child . . in . . trouble?

MR. HOGAN (ROARING): Chester, you witch! Will you shut up and let Lavinia get this over with? Go on, Lavinia.

MRS. PERKINS: I'm sure you both remember when Vanya came here . . . a year ago last January. Well, I never told you the real reason for her coming because I never thought I'd have to . . . but



now you've got to know because of what may happen any day or what Vanya may say. (FUMBLES FOR HANDKERCHIEF IN DRESS POCKET.)

MISS CHESTER: She isn't . . . insane?

MR. HOGAN: Damn it, Chester . . . shut up!

MRS. PERKINS: It's like a nightmare . . . (DABS AT HER EYES AND BLOWS HER NOSE) Vanya's going blind, and I had to tell you about it . . . that's the reason I got young Bill to take her for a walk this evening. I wanted her out of the house so I could explain things to you. Her folks sent her here to live with me because her friends in New York knew about it, and the family was afraid they'd tell her . . . so they sent her here to me where nobody knew about it. (CHOKES A SOB) I don't know what's the matter with me . . . I haven't had such a cry in years. (DABS WITH HANKIE) Anyway, Vanya still doesn't know. They don't want to tell her until they have to . . . because nothing in the world can save her sight . . .

MR. HOGAN: My God! My God, I say! Do they realize what a blow it'll be to her when she does find out? (SLAPS THE ARM OF THE CHAIR AND CHEWS VIGOROUSLY ON CIGAR) That girl's whole life is wrapped up in art. All she does day in and day out is paint, draw, and paint some more. Do they know what they're doing?

MRS. PERKINS: I don't know . . . I don't know. Her folks are trying to be kind and save her some pain. It would kill them to have to tell her too soon.

MISS CHESTER: Well, my goodness . . . can't the child tell whether she can see or not? It seems to me . . .

MRS. PERKINS: No . . . she can't. You see, Vanya is very imaginative. She does have blind spells, more frequently now than ever . . . but instead of recognizing what they are, she imagines things instead. She imagines that there's a young man named Keith Lamonte who comes to paint with her. She's even dreamed up his whole life history. He's an artist . . . a painter, supposed to be living at the Plaza Hotel here in town and going to the University. (BURSTS OUT) I can hardly stand it when she talks to me about him.

MISS CHESTER: Sounds crazy to me, Lavinia. Take her to a psychiatrist.

MRS. PERKINS: Vanya claims the young man is going blind and can only see in shades of blue. (CHOKES AND HASTILY WIPES HER EYES) Actually, that's what happens to Vanya. She can't see color any more, and she sees very dimly. It's the last stage before actual blindness.

MR. HOGAN: What do the doctors say?



MRS. PERKINS: Well, I don't know exactly. They say it's a subconscious something-or-other due to a subconscious knowledge of her coming blindness, which she refuses to believe. So instead of facing facts, she transfers the symptoms to Keith Lamonte. I can't explain it really . . . it's too complicated . . . but anyway, her spells are getting worse. I've written her family and asked . . . them what to do now, but I haven't heard from them yet. (SOBS) I just can't stand this thing much longer. If it doesn't kill Vanya, it'll kill me.

MR. HOGAN (GOING OVER AND COMFORTING HER): Lavinia, don't take on so. It's a tragic thing . . . but you've done all you can possibly do. We'll keep quiet and if anything comes up . . . then we'll do all we can to help. It's a damnable thing! But keep a stiff upper lip, honey . . .

MISS CHESTER (GOING OVER TO THE WINDOW): Straighten up, Lavinia. Here come the youngsters now . . . can't let them see you crying so. Quick now . . . everybody get like you were . . . and for heaven's sake, be natural.

HOGAN AND CHESTER SETTLE THEMSELVES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CHAIRS. HOGAN PICKS UP A NEWSPAPER AND CHESTER BEGINS TO CROCHET.

MRS. PERKINS (SNIFFING LOUDLY AND DABBING WITH HANKIE): Oh me! Oh my! SHE SETTLES BACK WITH COLD TEA

DOOR SLAMS AND VOICES ARE HEARD LAUGHING OFFSTAGE

MR. HOGAN (PUFFING ON CIGAR): You know, Lavinia . . . I like tea in the spring. Coffee is best in the winter, but in the spring, tea really hits the spot!

CURTAINS CLOSE

## SCENE II

THE NEXT MORNING, TUESDAY, ABOUT NOON. THE SCENE IS IN VANYA'S ROOM. THERE ARE TWO EASELS SET UP . . . ONE IS IN A CORNER, DRAPED WITH A BLACK SCARF; THE OTHER IS SET UP BY THE WINDOW WHERE VANYA IS PAINTING. THE ROOM IS A-CLUTTER WITH PAINT, BRUSHES, JARS OF TURPENTINE WITH MORE BRUSHES IN THEM, OLD RAGS, USED CANVASES, ETC. THE FURNISHINGS INCLUDE A SINGLE BED, A DRESSER, A CHEST OF DRAWERS, A CHAIR, AND A WINDOWSEAT. FRILLY CURTAINS ARE AT THE WINDOWS.

VANYA IS PAINTING AND HUMMING TO HERSELF WHILE SHE WORKS. SHE IS WEARING SLACKS, A NAVY BLUE SMOCK TRIMMED IN RED, AND MOCCASINS. THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR, AND MRS. PERKINS COMES IN WITH THE LUNCHEON TRAY.



MRS. PERKINS (SETTING THE TRAY ON THE DRESSER) : My goodness, child . . . you stay up here in this room all the time. If you don't get out in the sun some, you're going to look peaked-like. It just isn't right for a young girl as pretty as you are to waste yourself in hibernation. Here now . . . I brought you some lunch . . . and I want you to eat every mouthful . . . do you hear? Today's my day for the beauty parlor. That's the reason lunch is early again. Come on now and eat.

VANYA: It is lunch time already? I hadn't realized how quickly time was slipping by. (PUTS BRUSH IN TURPENTINE)

MRS. PERKINS: Vanya, I think it's high time you started getting out more with people your own age . . .

VANYA: Why? I'm perfectly happy. Besides, I've got Keith . . . he's my age . . . and Bill Baxter.

MRS. PERKINS (NERVOUSLY) : There are other people in this town besides those two. Bill could introduce you to his friends. They're intelligent, fine young people . . .

VANYA: And there's not a creative one in the whole lot. Really, Aunt Lavinia . . . I don't mean to be snobbish, but I'm really quite happy as I am. I see no reason to change.

MRS. PERKINS: Well . . . eat your lunch before it gets cold.

VANYA SITS DOWN AT THE DRESSER AND BEGINS TO EAT SLOWLY, AS IF FEELING HER WAY AROUND. SHE DOESN'T NOTICE HOW SLOW HER MOVEMENTS REALLY ARE . . .

MRS. PERKINS: I had a letter from your Mother and Dad today.

VANYA: What did they say?

MRS. PERKINS: That it's nice in New York now. Said they miss you and hope to get down to see you this week-end. (SHE BEGINS TO PUTTER ABOUT THE ROOM STRAIGHTENING AND PICKING UP THINGS) Robbie's giving them a bit of trouble now that he has a steady girl. You know how teen-age boys are about cars.

VANYA: So Robbie has a girl. How about that!

MRS. PERKINS: I think he's too young myself . . . but young folks nowadays aren't like what they used to be. (PAUSES) (WALKS OVER TO VAN) Van . . . what about you, honey? What will you do when you become of age? I can't bear to think of you going out into the world . . . (TURNS AWAY AND PUTS HER HAND UP TO HER THROAT)

VANYA: Oh, I'll get a job . . . and I'll paint. Don't worry, I won't sponge off Dad any longer than I have to. Since I couldn't finish college, Dad gave me these two years to do as I pleased . . . for recompense I guess. (DRINKS TEA FROM GLASS)



MRS. PERKINS: Well . . . that isn't exactly what I meant, dear . . . but I still say you need to get out more. Being a hermit isn't going to help you become a painter. You've got to see things and be with people . . .

VANYA: Aunt Lavinia . . . please. (SETS GLASS DOWN WITH A BANG) What I'd like to do most in the world right . . . now is to help Keith . . . and the only way I can help him is to encourage him. He wants to exhibit some of his paintings in the University Galleries before his eyes go . . . but he isn't ready yet. Lately he's been staying more with me to think and paint in peace and quiet . . . and so I must work while he's not here. Do you understand?

MRS. PERKINS (HAND GOES TO THROAT IN ANXIETY): Vanya, Vanya . . . (Turns away) Can't the doctors do anything?

VANYA: No, they've tried everything, and still his eyes are going.

MRS. PERKINS: I see. Well . . . I know how you feel for him, but try to make the best of things. The good Lord knows what He's doing.

VANYA (ALMOST BITTERLY): That's what I've been told . . . but a blind painter is no good, Aunt Lavinia . . . not for himself or for society or for art. He might as well be dead.

MRS. PERKINS: Don't talk like that! Don't talk like that! Do you hear? Now listen to me. You can't help Keith, so quit your moping. All you can do is to be kind and perhaps help him to accept things just a little better. (PAUSE) Van . . . I didn't mean to preach . . . but I'm concerned. I really am. (LOOKS AT WATCH) Goodness gracious! I've got to run to the beauty parlor. (GOES TO DOOR . . . STOPS AND LOOKS BACK) Don't forget now . . . no more of your moping. If doctors can't help Keith, then you can't help him, no matter how hard you try. (LEAVES QUICKLY)

VANYA (TO HERSELF): Poor Auntie . . . always in a stew about Keith. Every time I talk about him, she acts so strangely . . . (RUBS HAND ACROSS HER EYES) . . . my head . . . feels so funny . . .  
LIGHTS TURN BLUE

VANYA: Keith? Is that you?

KEITH WALKS SLOWLY IN THE DOOR. HE IS WEARING DARK TROUSERS, A WHITE SHIRT WITH THE SLEEVES ROLLED TO THE ELBOWS AND THE COLLAR OPEN. HE WEARS SUNGLASSES AND CARRIES A CANE.

KEITH: H'lo Vanya. Today's a nice day for working. Everything smells so nice with all the flowers in bloom. I just walked from the University, and it's a wonderful day for walking, too. I almost couldn't bring myself to come inside.

VANYA: I haven't been out today . . . been working instead. WALKS OVER TO EASEL) I tried the red as you suggested for the first



figure, and it does very nicely. But I need more yellow in this somewhere . . .

KEITH: You and your yellows . . . (LAUGHS) What have we here; a little Van Gogh? Let me see it, Hon . . . (LOOKS OVER HER SHOULDER) Ummm . . . not bad in composition, from what I can see of it. What colors are you using for shadows?

VANYA: Blues . . . all different shades . . .

KEITH: Blue! Hideous! Not because you chose blue, Hon . . . but I connect blue with this infirmity of mine. (POINTS TO EYES . . . THEN HE BEGINS TO WALK UP AND DOWN IN THOUGHT WITH HANDS BEHIND HIS BACK) Van? I think I'm losing my mind. I can't see any sort of color any more and it's driving me nuts! The only way I can tell red is red is to read the label on the paint tubes. I used to be able to see color and bits of white light here and there . . . but now all I can see is blue. Blue hands, blue bodies, blue clothes, blue trees, blue hair, blue . . . blue . . . blue! (SLAMS HIS FIST INTO THE PALM OF HIS HAND) And light hurts my eyes! I have to paint with dark glasses on now . . . which makes things even muddier than they are. I can't work like I used to, either. It takes me hours to paint one detail. (SIGHS DEEPLY) Dear God, I'm tired . . . and yet there's something still in me that won't let me rest . . .

VANYA: If it's a painting, for God's sake don't waste time. Paint it.

KEITH: I feel it's my masterpiece, and yet I hate it because of what it stands for.

VANYA: Keith, you're mad! How can you hate a work that you've not even begun yet? How is that possible?

KEITH (SLAMMING A FIST AGAINST A WALL IN ANGER): Because it's in blue . . . don't you understand . . . the whole thing is nothing but shades of blue. I can't see anything else. It's a monster . . . a blue madonna . . . a monster without human color, but created by an idiotic fool who sees the need of a modern madonna. (SLUMPS DEJECTEDLY)

VANYA: Don't torture yourself like that, Keith! A blue madonna would certainly be more interesting than some of the Dada exhibits.

KEITH: Don't joke with me!

VANYA: I'm not joking with you, Keith. I'm only trying to help . . . but obviously (SHE TURNS AWAY FROM HIM) you'd rather wallow in self-pity than to be prodded into a better frame of mind.

KEITH: That's not so! That's not so . . . do you hear? (PAUSE) Don't you see that a part of me dies with my sight? Do you know what it is not to see color . . . to see everything in a hazy blue mist so that it takes hours to paint a hand, a foot, or the corner of a robe?



VANYA: Stop it! I do know! I've watched you, Keith . . . and it breaks my heart. It isn't fun . . . but talking about it, thinking about it all day long, and dreaming about it at night isn't helping you one bit. And it isn't helping me, either. You must learn to accept this thing, or you'll be maladjusted the rest of your life.

PAUSE . . . THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER FOR A LONG MOMENT . . .

KEITH (GOING OVER TO DRAPED EASEL): Well . . . I'll have to finish it, now that I've started it in my own mind. I can't get it out of my system any other way. (BEGINS STIRRING PAINT) And then I have plans . . . (BITTERLY) Plans for the Blue Madonna.

### CURTAINS CLOSE

### SCENE III

THIS SCENE TAKES PLACE THURSDAY AFTERNOON ABOUT FOUR P.M. IT'S IN THE LIVING ROOM. MISS CHESTER AND MR. HOGAN ARE PLAYING CHECKERS. BILL BAXTER IS REPAIRING A LAMP AND HAS TOOLS, WIRES, ETC., SCATTERED EVERYWHERE. MRS. PERKINS IS CROCHETING NERVOUSLY . . .

MR. HOGAN (MAKING A MOVE ON THE CHECKERBOARD): Well, Bill . . . how does it feel to work on your day off? Kind of rough isn't it, son?

BILL: Oh, I really don't mind, Mr. Hogan. I haven't anything else to do but just lie around or read or something.

MRS. PERKINS: Well, at least somebody does some repairing around here. Mr. Hogan, one of these days, if you're not careful, somebody's going to put you in your proper place.

MISS CHESTER (LAUGHING): I hope I'm there to see it.

MR. HOGAN: Shut up, Chester, and make your move. This isn't a game of chess we're playing.

MISS CHESTER: If it was, I wouldn't be playing with YOU. Who'd want to gaze at your ugly face for years over a chess board?

VANYA COMES INTO THE ROOM WEARING A COTTON DRESS, HEELS, AND CARRYING PARCELS. SHE APPEARS A LITTLE DISHEVELED AND SHE GROPES HER WAY TO THE SOFA, FLOPS, AND LEANS HER HEAD BACK.

VANYA: Hi, everybody! Honestly, it's so hot in town . . . and the sun is so bright outside that I can hardly see when I come inside. It's so dark in here . . . I can hardly make out shape.

MISS CHESTER (LOOKING OUT WINDOW): That's funny . . . sun's not even out. Sky's been overcast all day long . . .

EVERYBODY GASPS IN HORROR . . .

MR. HOGAN (CLEARING HIS THROAT): It's the glare. Glare is



always worse on cloudy days. Now would you mind moving that king you've had your eye on for an hour, Miss Chester?

CHESTER OBEDIENTLY MOVES THE KING.

MR. HOGAN: Now, Bill . . . instead of fixing lamps on a pretty spring day, what you ought to do is take Vanya on a picnic. If I was fifty years younger, I'd do it myself. Might do it anyway.

BILL: That's an excellent idea! But I'll have to save it for next week. What do you say, Van?

VANYA: No . . . not that I don't want to go . . . but I have some painting to do that might take me a couple of weeks. Besides, I must be here when Keith needs me.

EVERYBODY EXCHANGES GLANCES . . . THE SILENCE IS STRAINED.

VANYA: You know, Aunt Lavinia . . . Keith's almost finished his masterpiece . . . you remember, the one I told you about . . . the Blue Madonna. He's been working like a slave to finish it this week . . . and I think he wants to exhibit it in the University Galleries. Just what would one do . . . I mean . . . how would he go about arranging for exhibition?

MRS. PERKINS (NERVOUSLY AND PANICKY): Well . . . I . . . I just don't know . . .

VANYA: I mean . . . who should we see about it?

MR. HOGAN (GRUFFLY): The head of the Art Department . . . who will take it to the Dean . . . who will take it to the President . . . who will put it before a board . . . who will accept or reject it.

VANYA: Thank you, Mr. Hogan. Who knows, perhaps Keith will be famous someday for that very painting.

MR. HOGAN: You're welcome. Your move, Chester.

CHESTER AND HOGAN PLAY CHECKERS IN SILENCE.  
BILL WORKS SILENTLY ON LAMP.

MRS. PERKINS: Did you get your shoes?

VANYA: Yes . . . and I bought a blouse, too. It's real lacy and pretty.

MRS. PERKINS: Van . . . your Mother and Dad are coming this weekend.

VANYA: Oh, good! And Robbie?

MRS. PERKINS: No. He's staying at home . . . a big dance or something. Please dear . . . do you think you can stay away from Keith and your art long enough to talk to them decently?

VANYA: What do you mean? They've never minded my art before.

MRS. PERKINS (WORRIEDLY): I didn't mean it in a bad sense, honey . . . it's just that . . . well . . . they want to talk to you about something very important. That's all.

VANYA: I don't understand.

MRS. PERKINS: Well, for goodness sakes, don't worry your head about it. You'll see when they get here. (PAUSE) Van, don't worry about it now. You'll know in time . . . so just sit in your canoe



and don't worry about the next low bridge. If you're hungry, there's a chocolate cake in there on the sideboard and some milk in the refrigerator.

VANYA (BURSTS OUT LAUGHING): From the way you talk to me, Aunt Lavinia, you'd think I was five years old. Honey, let me tell you . . . I'm past the milk and cookies stage.

VANYA TURNS ON HER HEEL AND LEAVES THE ROOM.

MRS. PERKINS: Oh dear . . . what have I done? I practically told her. Oh, dear goodness! Now she'll begin to wonder and worry about things.

MR. HOGAN: That's not what I'm worried about. What about this painting she wants to exhibit? What will happen to her if she takes the fantastic Keith and his masterpiece to the University? They'll either lock her up for being looney . . . or she'll discover that Keith Lamonte doesn't exist.

BILL: Maybe I can keep her busy enough to keep her mind off it for a while. But it surely will take a lot of persuasion. She has no love for me, and she makes no bones about it.

MRS. PERKINS: Anything! Anything! Just keep her busy. Don't let her think about it. Oh, my dear God . . . what will come of it all?

CURTAINS CLOSE

#### SCENE IV

THE SCENE TAKES PLACE IN VANYA'S ROOM. IT'S THURSDAY EVENING ABOUT NINE O'CLOCK. THE LIGHTS ARE BLUE. KEITH AND VANYA ARE AT SEPARATE EASELS WORKING.

KEITH: I'm almost done, Vanya. There's only one corner of the robe to go.

VANYA: Why don't you rest a minute? You've been working like a madman for days.

KEITH (IGNORING HER): This is a ridiculous thing! A masterpiece in composition and technique . . . but it's lifeless . . . has no color. Blue lips, blue nose, blue skin . . . she looks dead. A hideous thing . . . revolting . . . yet magnetic in its horror.

VANYA: Are you going to the University with it?

KEITH: I don't know. I might . . . and I might not. You know, Van . . . every artist has one great masterpiece . . . only one. He spends his whole life working up to it, and after that he goes down hill.

VANYA: But Keith . . . you MUST go to the University. After all this work, this mad labor . . .

KEITH: Shut up and leave me alone. This is my bastard, not yours. I'll be through soon, and I'll do as I please. (PUTS BRUSH DOWN AND WALKS OVER TO VANYA) But listen to me, Van . . . after tonight, I won't be back. When I'm through with the Ma-



donna, I won't be back. I'm checking out. It's my very last painting . . . do you understand . . . I won't be back.

VANYA: But where are you going . . . what are you going to do? I don't understand.

KEITH: It isn't for you to understand right now. You will know in time. But I have plans, and they must be carried out. If I succeed, you'll hear from it; if not . . . then you won't. I'll be useless soon . . . as good as dead. I'll be completely blind, Vanya Christina . . . blind! As blind as the bat that flies in incongruent circles.

VANYA: Oh, Keith! Not . . . totally blind. Not yet so soon . . .

KEITH (BITTERLY): Yes . . . soon. So very soon, Vanya Christina.

#### SCENE V

THIS SCENE TAKES PLACE IN THE KITCHEN. THE CHARACTERS ARE IN BATHROBES AND SLIPPERS DAWDLING OVER BREAKFAST, EXCEPT FOR BILL WHO IS DRESSED AND READING THE PAPER. MRS. PERKINS IS OVER THE STOVE COOKING. VANYA STROLLS IN SLEEPILY. IT IS FRIDAY MORNING.

VANYA: 'Morning everybody. Gosh, it surely is dark in here. (TURNS TO FLIP ON LIGHTS) The lights are already on! Well, why in the world is it so dark?

EVERYBODY IS STRAINED. MRS. PERKINS DROPS SPOON.

HOGAN: It's a bad day out there. We might have a storm brewing.

VANYA: Whew! For a moment there, I thought I was going blind. (SHE SITS DOWN AT TABLE)

MISS CHESTER CHOKES ON ORANGE JUICE.

BILL (EXCITEDLY): Great God! Listen to this! "A rare and mysterious painting found its way into the University Galleries last night, said President H. S. Lansing. It is an oil painting of excellent composition and technique, having a blue madonna as the subject matter. Anyone knowing the unknown painter or his whereabouts, please contact the University immediately."

VANYA: Keith! Keith! That's Keith's painting! I told you! I told you! He'll be famous. Oh, I'll have to call the hotel and congratulate him. (STARTS TO LEAVE)

HOGAN: Well, for God's sake let the boy get his beauty rest. It isn't polite to wake a body at this hour in the morning.

VANYA: But I've got to catch him before he leaves. He's going today . . .

MRS. PERKINS (DEJECTEDLY): Go ahead, Van, if it'll make you happier. You'll know sooner or later anyway.

VANYA PICKS UP PHONE AND DIALS. THERE IS A PAUSE.

VANYA: Will you connect me with Keith Lamonte's room please? (PAUSE) I beg your pardon. (PAUSE) No one is registered there by that name! Oh . . . has he checked out then? (PAUSE)



No Keith Lamonte has ever been registered there! But that's impossible. He was there only yesterday! (PAUSE) What? . . .

Thank you . . . (HANGS UP PHONE)

BILL: Are you sure that's the right hotel?

VANYA: Yes, I'm sure. He only mentioned it once . . . but I'm sure that's it . . . Where could he be?

MISS CHESTER: Just don't worry about it dear. I'm sure everything's all right. You know yourself how temperamental artists are . . .

VANYA: Yes, but that explains nothing now. He couldn't have just disappeared off the face of the earth. (THOUGHTFUL PAUSE) Hand me the paper, Bill. (SHE READS ARTICLE LABORIOUSLY AND CLOSE TO THE PAGE) Yes . . . from the description, that's his madonna. He never let me see it, but he described it perfectly.

BILL: Well, I hope you find him. (STANDING UP) I've got to go to work. (EXITS)

MISS CHESTER: And I've got some cleaning to do. (SHE EXITS)

VANYA: I've got to call the University. They must KNOW that the painting is Keith's.

HOGAN: The president's office doesn't open till nine.

VANYA: Then I'll call his home . . .

MRS. PERKINS: Oh, Vanya . . . eat your breakfast so I can wash up. I haven't got time to dilly-dally with you this morning.

HOGAN: Well, as an old man should, I'll bow out on the last performance. (EXITS)

VANYA: What's wrong with everybody?

MRS. PERKINS: I haven't the vaguest notion. Eat your breakfast dear.

VANYA: Aunt Lavinia . . . this may not be important to you, but it's important to me. I'm calling President Lansing. It's only 8:30, but I'm quite sure he's up. (DIALS) Hello. May I speak with President Lansing, please? (LONG PAUSE) President Lansing, I called about the Blue Madonna . . . I know who the artist is . . . (PAUSE) What! Oh! . . . well . . . thank you . . . thank you very much . . . (HANGS UP SLOWLY)

LIGHTS TURN BLUE

MRS. PERKINS: Well . . .

VANYA (AS IN A DAZE): The name of the artist was found on the painting a half hour ago . . .

MRS. PERKINS: And . . .

VANYA: The name was Vanya Christina . . .

MRS. PERKINS: My dear . . . (HOLDS HER) . . . now do you understand?

VANYA: Please turn on the lights . . . (SCREAMS) Won't somebody turn on the lights!? (HOLDS ONTO MRS. PERKINS AND SOBS AS THE CURTAINS CLOSE)

THE END



## AUTUMN

Once as I was wandering through the woods  
I came upon a little man seated by a stream.  
And there I heard many a tale from his lips

Of how the fairies danced there in the spring  
And drank their wine of berry-red.

But now the winds of Fall had crept in

And turned the canopy of leaves from emerald green  
To red and gold.

And how the meadow fair would soon wear a coat  
Of golden-brown.

And how the moon would turn from silver to gold  
And send its glow across the wood and meadows.

So little fairies dressed in their fall green and rust  
Could come out and dance and sing.

One by one they would slip away into the fields.

And there you could see them scampering up and down  
And playing hide-and-seek among the pumpkins.

In and out, in and out, they would play for half the night.  
Then merrily, they would return to the meadow

Where they would dance and sing to the tune of a cricket.

They would dance and dance and sing

Until the first glow of rose touched the eastern sky.

Then, one mad scurry to their homes among the ivy-green.

And now my good child dusk has fallen

And the hour does approach

When all fairies to the meadow go

And dream of fairies and sugar plums.

For you see I am a fairy, too,

And I must merrily go.

So fare-thee-well, my fair one,

And may you have pleasant dreams this night.

I wandered slowly from the woods

And low the first frost of fall had come.

And covered the ground

As a carpet of heavenly jewels sparkling in the dust  
Of coming night.

And in the distance I could hear

The scampering of tiny feet

And the muttering of voices

As fairies merrily went to the harvest field of Autumn.

Mary Exa Ford

*pity this busy monster, e. e. cummings  
 not. no-caps is a comfortable disease:  
 his victim (custom and the trend safely beyond)  
 is the shift key, raising not its tire-  
 some, not to mention quite conventional, head  
 to deify its petty self into  
 a thing to interrupt the unthoughts of  
 so great an unpoet as cummings is.  
 come now!*

*a sentence of made  
 is not a sentence of born — pity poor verse,  
 in recognizable pentameter  
 and capital letters, too, but never this  
 fine specimen of ultrabohebian  
 crypticism. we poets know  
 how to throw our readers off the trail  
 if the gist becomes too obvious.  
 if they can understand it, it's not art.*

Mary Ann Taylor

## Shades of Green Within

BY N. SCHULER

The shadows of dusk gathered on the rooftops of New York. It was Christmas Eve, and Annette sat in her window looking across the fire-escape at the scenes below.

Down in the street moved the mass of people, coming home after Christmas shopping, knocking into one another, rushing to catch the subway. Everyone knew where he was going, and everyone was with someone else.

Annette turned from the view of the street, and looked across the narrow tenement yard into the flat of the next building. There the old German couple were enjoying their Christmas Eve. There was an imitation tree in the window, trimmed with a few blue and white lights. The woman fixed their meagre meal, and its steam arose into the atmosphere of closeness and harmony, knitting together the picture, making it unerasable. But the joy of those two people was too great for Annette. She had to turn away, biting away the tears that rose in her eyes.

She looked into the window on the floor below. There she saw two girls about her age. They were gaily getting ready to go out. There was an air of excitement and expectation to their preparation that gave the feeling that they were always occupied with something important, something worth-while, something to make themselves and others happy. One of the girls, Annette knew, was a ballet dancer . . . a member of the American Ballet Company. She could close her eyes and see the girl in an



empty theatre . . . a theatre that had not been used for weeks, where dust had gathered on the seats, stale cigarette butts littered the floor, and a janitor cleaned the highest galleries. The girl was on the stage, strains of imaginary music filled the air . . . music too haunting to be real . . . and the girl danced, danced, and danced. Oh, how satisfying it must be to release one's whole body into such abandon. Suddenly the music faded, the house lights dimmed, and Annette realized that she was in her own flat. It was Christmas Eve. And she was alone.

Down in the alley a little kid played. She played hop-skotch in the cold, freezing wind. Yet even she was not cold and alone, for as she stopped to pick up the pebble, a small, furry piece of honey-colored puppy rubbed up against her, licking her hand; giving warmth, friendliness, and reassurance.

Once again Annette turned back into herself. Well, she had the choice of going to a movie alone, or walking the streets alone, trying to lose herself in the crowd. This was almost more than she could bear, but the movie alone seemed worse. So she moved from the chair, drank a glass of milk from the ice-box, put on her coat, and wrapped her soft violet scarf around her neck. As she walked down the stairs she pulled on her gloves, then stuck her hands into her pockets, her fingers curling up like a little child's when he is afraid.

Out in the street she became another of the mad sea of people. Yet, she thought, they are all happy, and I am alone . . . Really, I am not one of them. The people were as one great, black wall to her, no different from the walls of the buildings that she passed, forbidding and cold. She walked on and on, neither knowing nor caring in what direction she was going. After many blocks, she found herself in Central Park. She discovered an isolated spot with a little bench; sat down, drawing her little shell more tightly around her. After a few moments thus, something seemed to draw her eyes to the sky, and she was held by a tiny, twinkling star that appeared different from all the rest. It had a slight red glow, and its rays reached out, spoke to her, warming her heart. As she looked at the star it sounded a chord within her . . . a chord that had long been dormant. She began to think of the star as *her* star . . . The one thing in the world that was close to her on this Christmas Eve. A warm surge of life swept her body, and she was content. Happiness remained a thing in the future. But with her star she realized that she could wait. It would not be forever until she would have someone, and in the meantime how much beauty, how much life, there was to be known.

She looked away from the star regretfully, knowing that her eyes would often return that way, renewing her faith in life itself. As she began her long walk home, she felt a newness of self. She felt at one with the great, surging people. And yet she was different, no longer different because she was alone; but because she had come to a realization of life. Many of these people had never come to that, and if loneliness was necessary then she was thankful for being alone.



Dear Diary,

Some day I'm going to write a book about children. And because I want to include a chapter or two of all the priceless sayings my little ones here at the Children's Home say to me, I want to tell you about today's "quotable quotes." Being the recreational director here for the summer promises to be one of the most meaningful and unique summers I may ever spend; especially if today is any indication of what I can expect for the next eight weeks.

Since you know how much I love children, and especially the cute things they come up with, I think you can understand and perhaps get a chuckle, too, when I tell you about some of the day's activities.

In the Junior boys' and girls' cottages some forty little children ages 4-8 awakened at the crack of dawn remembering that I had promised them we'd go on a hike through the woods immediately after breakfast, (which I'm quite convinced they must have swallowed whole, they were so excited). I had no idea that some of them had never been on a hike, nor that some had never heard of the word until a chubby little four-year-old blonde asked another tot where we were going, and then came running up to me exclaiming loudly, "Oh, we're going to the bushes; we're going to the bushes!" If only I had known before we left that I would have to carry this same child in my arms all morning as we climbed hills and roamed through the woods . . .

As we took a short-cut through the field where some cows were grazing, one of the "braver little men" decided he'd like to chase a cow. Before I had time to stop him, Paul, a tongue-tied little blond, had yelled at the top of his voice, "Don't you chase dose cows 'cause if you do dey'll give sour milk!" And as Paul turned and looked at me with his big grin that showed two teeth missing, I couldn't help thinking of another statement he had made: "When I dit grown, I'm gonna drown my Daddy in the ribber." Not knowing about his past home life, I couldn't fully understand, but I keep trying to imagine what must have happened in his home to cause him to feel this way. I want so much to help him.

But back to the humorous side of today's activities. At lunch I was quite amused when a little girl marched up to me and very indignantly demanded, "Leen, why can't we have arts and CRABS like the big girls do?"

Things moved along rather quietly for a while until it was time for the smallest ones to go "swimming." My job was to keep them all at the shallow end of the pool; this proved to be a big order because some of them just couldn't force themselves to believe that they really couldn't swim if only they had the chance to get unto that deep water! And the classical statement made at the pool today was Sandra's, "Leen, did you know my bathing suit is waterproof?"



As my first day came to a close, I found myself wondering if this, the hardest thing I had ever undertaken to do, was worth all the effort, but in a moment I felt so utterly ashamed of myself for having let such a thought pass through my mind; and the thing that made me know I was where I was needed was little Linda's words as she hugged me tightly and whispered in my ear, "Do you think you could be my big sister and stay with me all the days?"

Yes, someday I'm going to write a book about children, for "of such is the Kingdom . . ."

Goodnight,

Leen

## POEM

Soft . .

low . .

*your soul is near;*

*I can feel it brush my own as the wings of a soft  
grey dove brush the evening sky.*

Still . .

quiet . .

*you are here . .*

*and yet no words are needed, for silence is the  
language of the soul as love is the language  
of the heart.*

Stay . .

stay . .

*there is such peace with you . .*

*peace, like the sunset tones which still the mind to  
all save beauty . . and one throbbing, pulsing star  
that flames along the sunset's golden rim.*

Fly now . .

fly . .

*go whither you will;*

*a dove in hand returns no more to grace the love  
therein.*

Soft . .

low . .

*you linger yet . .*

*like music when the wind bows her muted strings . . .  
and our souls have met as circular ripples  
of rain in a quiet pool.*

Charlye Wiggins

# Babylon

BY JANE POWERS

Sid sat on the battered overstuffed chair and listened to the music pounding and surging around him. The beat was slow, throbbing and the knot in the pit of his stomach clinched and hardened with each steady pulse. There was almost a hypnotic quality in the steady rhythm; primitive as a Jamaican witchdoctor's drum.

He aimlessly stared around the long room, watching the others. All their attention was focused on the center of the dance floor, where a couple concentrated on the intricate steps their feet executed.

Sid purposely kept his eyes turned from the couple. He didn't have to see them to know how they looked. Sally's long blonde hair would be loosely swinging across her shoulders with each beat of the music; Sam's cold blue eyes would be riveted to her teasing brown ones; their slim young bodies would sway evenly. Sally. The knot in his stomach grew larger. Sally should be dancing with *him*—Sid. She was his girl and Sam knew it. Sam also knew what to do about it.

Sid's honest blue eyes were puzzled as he looked back over the night. He had felt from the moment they walked into the Hangout that Sam was deliberately antagonizing him, and making a play for Sally. Sam was like that—big ladies' man. But when Sally began flirting those brown eyes back at Sam, Sid began worrying. As he sat there, he admitted to himself what he had been refusing to think about for weeks. Sally's actions were merely a sign of the growing rift between them.

He remembered the conversation they had had last Saturday night. He could see the gold pool Sally's hair made shimmering on her shoulders.

"Sid . . ."

"What, honey "

"You know, I graduate in a month."

"Yeah. Excited?"

"A little. Not just about graduation."

"I remember when *I* graduated. You and I went to a party afterwards, and that's when you said you'd go steady with me. Maybe some day we'll be celebrating my graduation from the university."

He remembered the way her eyes had veiled as she looked at him, and he knew why. He had worked for two years after his graduation from high school, and finally had enough money to attend college. His boss was keeping him for part-time work, so that he would have few financial worries.

His mind raced in circles. His job was excellent, but a degree in engineering would mean security for the rest of his life. On the other hand, he now made a large enough salary to marry Sally and support her well.

*I want her and need her too badly. She needs a couple of years to mature. If only she could see that . . . All she sees is now . . . She'll outgrow her lightheaded, dizzy outlook on life.*



Sid could hear Sally's answer to his plans for college.

"Sid . . . Do you love me?"

"You know I do, Sally."

"Why won't you marry me then, Sid? *Now*, Sid?"

"Sally, I thought you understood. If we wait four years—for my graduation—we will have a much fuller life. We'll both be more stable and sure of what we want."

"I'm sure now . . ."

\* \* \*

Funny that Sam could sense the unrest in Sally. It was almost as if someone, or something, had told him that this would be a good time for him to make his play.

Sid's eyes traveled to the dance floor again. A dreamy love song was playing now, and Sam held Sally close. Sid felt a surge of anger, but quickly checked it. Somehow, he knew he shouldn't get angry with Sally tonight. Not tonight. Not until he rid himself of the feeling that—that, well, it wouldn't let itself be expressed. Still, not tonight, while this creeping dread seemed to settle upon him like the mists which covered the lake around this time of year.

The dancers moved into his line of vision. Sid was unable to control the jealousy that he felt at the sight of his girl in another man's arms. He rose and strode across the floor.

Smilingly, he asked, "Cut in, Sam?"

"Well . . ."

"Thanks, fella'. Hi, honey."

"Hello, Sid. Where've ya' been?"

"Right over there in the big chair. Watching you."

"Oh? Funny, I didn't see you."

"You weren't looking at me."

"Sid, I have to tell you something." Her eyes were troubled and she raced to say the words. Sid tried not to listen, for all night long he'd been waiting to hear them with a sick dread.

"We can't go steady while you're at the university, Sid." She avoided his eyes. "It wouldn't be fair to either of us."

"What makes you say that. Is it Sam?"

"Let's keep Sam out of this. I just mean that we'll both get mighty tired of sitting around every Saturday night you can't afford to come home and see me. It would be good for us to go out. Yes, good to go out." She repeated the words and seemed to draw conviction from the phrase.

Sid tried to push back the angry words he felt coming. *What's wrong with me tonight? I know what I'm going to say, but I don't want to say it. Why can't I stop? What's pushing me toward this quarrel?*

"Stop it, Sally. I know you mean more than you're saying."

"Sid, you're just making it harder for me to say what I have to. I don't want to hurt you. But Sam . . . I mean . . ."



"I know what you mean. You mean you'd like to see more of Sam while I'm gone. That's it, isn't it? Why not say it and get it over with?"

"All right, Sid, if that's how it has to be. Yes, I *do* want to go with Sam. I thought it would be easier for you if I broke things to you in a different way, but maybe you're right. Of course you're right. Sid is always right, isn't he?"

"You said that, Sally. I didn't."

"That's right. I've said it all, and it's all my fault. But I'm beginning not to care a bit. Maybe I've been wasting my time with you."

"Sally . . ."

"Se ya' around, Sid." And she walked across the floor to Sam, who had been watching them with a half smile on his thin lips . . .

\* \* \*

The music pulsed about him. Its ebb and flow filled his ears, his heart, the throb like a heartbeat, that rocked his whole world. Sid reached over and snapped off the car radio. The melody was the same that had followed him as he strode from the Hangout.

His thoughts tumbled over one another, each struggling to blot out the others. The car raced along the shore road, its driver not realizing that his thoughts were driving the speedometer up, and up, and up.

Suddenly headlights loomed around the curve ahead. Sid automatically swerved to the right and took his foot from the gas pedal.

The curve was sharp. With a sick dread, Sid saw the car rushing toward him. He was powerless to change his course, and as his hands swung the wheel even farther around, he already knew it was too late, too late . . .

Why didn't the drum stop? It hurt his head too much. Had to get up and turn off the radio . . . The drum was too loud for the rest of the music. It was drowned out completely. Slowly Sid fought his way up from the depths of a whirling mass of sound. He discovered that there was no drum, no drum at all. Only his head throbbing, throbbing, throbbing.

He struggled to his elbow. He had been thrown from the car down a small embankment. The waters of the lake lapped gently at one of his hands. Everything was still and serene.

*How nice to be here, next to the lake. But why am I here?*

With a stab of pain, he remembered. The car, the other car!

He slowly climbed the bank and looked around. A few yards down the road he could see the other car. Or rather, what was left of it. It was a battered mass of steel, wrapped around a huge oak tree. As he limped toward the car, he saw that there were several people in it. He tried to hold back, but a stronger power seemed to force him toward the car.

The driver hung out the window. Cold blue eyes stared sightlessly up. Then Sid saw the pool of gold thrust through the windshield. Only now it was matted by ugly red stains. He was drawn closer by some horrible fascination, until he saw that there was no life in the car. No life at all.

The gold pool—the *blonde* pool. Sid snapped into full consciousness.

"Oh, my God; my God . . ."



# She Just Loved Steve

BY CARMELLA CHRISTOPHER

I met him because he was Phyllis' daddy. She and Stevie used to brag about their father all the time. Whenever any of the kids we went around with started talking about parents, Phyllis would say, "Well, I've got the most handsome father!" Or Stevie would say, "My daddy can draw better than *ANYBODY*!" Sometimes it was almost disgusting the way those two bragged—and mostly Phyllis. She just loved Steve. He loved her, too. He used to kiss her a lot and hold her on his lap and tell her stories. He was real good to Stevie, too, but I always thought to myself that he really loved Phyllis more.

It wasn't surprising that he loved her. She was beautiful. Even when she was a tiny girl, she was just beautiful. She had blond hair and blue eyes—and she looked almost exactly like Steve. I guess the only thing that really was different about their looks was that he had black hair—and, of course, he was the daddy and she was only a little girl.

Steve was a baker. He could really make good pastry, and whenever any of us kids had a birthday he'd always decorate the cake so it would look like a ranch, or a circus, or anything like that. I remember one time on Phyllis' birthday, he made her a cake that had just loads of little bitty ballet dancers on it. I used to love to get invited to their house for parties.

Phyllis' mother was pretty, too. She always used to come over to our house and drink coffee with Momma. In fact, she practically stayed at our house all the time. I never did like her as much as I liked Steve. She was kind of loud, and she liked to tease people and make fun of them. I didn't like that.

Phyllis and Stevie and Dave and I used to pal around with each other, and during the daytime we'd play in Phyllis and Stevie's yard 'cause it was real big. When we did, we had to play away from the bedroom window because Steve had to work late at night in the bakery so he slept during the day. Then when Steve got up he'd call us in and we'd have a party. He'd fix us sodas and we'd have cookies, too. Steve really knew some funny stories, and the rest of the afternoon we would all sit around and listen to him and laugh. Gee, sometimes I'd really ache from laughing so hard. He was sure funny.

Dave and I hated to leave there, but Daddy told us one day that he was building us a new house in another part of town, and so it wasn't long before we moved.

After that, we only saw Phyllis and her folks once in a while, and then one day we got some real bad news. Steve was sick. He had fallen down in the bakery and hurt his leg. The doctors thought they had fixed



it, but from then on he was never the same. Finally it got so bad that Steve had to use a cane—then crutches.

During this time, Phyllis' mother learned to drive their car, and so she started coming up to our new house almost as much as she had come across the street to our old house.

I liked her okay, but she still poked fun at people, and she had even started poking fun at Steve. She was always complaining about he was just making believe he was sick. Momma used to tell Daddy about that when he came home. Daddy used to get real mad and say that Evelyn should be ashamed of herself—and I heard him tell Momma once that he didn't want us kids to hear Evelyn talk like that. After that time, Momma used to send me on errands when Evelyn came and started talking bad about Steve.

All along I never saw Stevie or Phyllis very much because Dave and I were going to a different school than they did. In fact for a long time I didn't see Phyllis at all—then one day she came to our house with Evelyn. When we were all sitting in our kitchen—my momma, and Phyllis and her mother and me—Momma asked Evelyn, "How has Steve been?" Evelyn said, "He's about the same—you know." Just then Phyllis said real loud that her "old man" was just "plain lazy." I was so shocked that I didn't know what to do. My momma was shocked too; I could tell that from the look on her face and the way she changed the subject real fast.

After that day, I got used to Phyllis coming up to our house with her mother. I got used to her talking like that about her father too, but that still didn't make me like to hear it anymore. The thing that bothered me more than anything was that Evelyn used to act like she liked to hear Phyllis say mean things about Steve.

A long time went by and then one day Momma took me with her when she went to town. We saw Steve there. It had been almost a year since I had seen him and he looked awful. He was real thin and tired-looking. And he wasn't smiling. He had smiled all the time before. When we talked to him he was awfully sad. He said, "I could have taken anything, but not my own children turning against me." I knew he really meant Phyllis, because little Stevie was still nice to him. Steve told Momma he was going to leave. He said, "I don't know when I'm coming back—if ever."

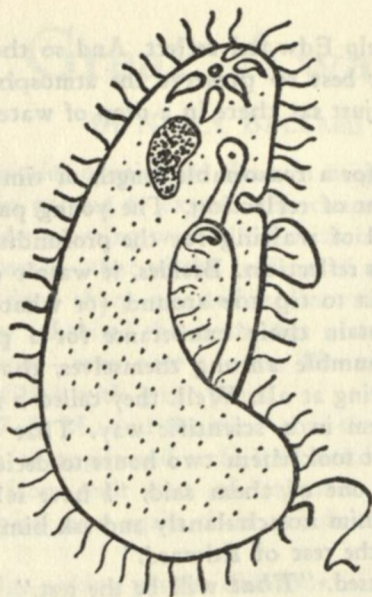
It was about a week later that I found out that Steve really meant what he said. He left, saying he was going up north to see a doctor about his leg.

That was about a year ago. They get money from him every two weeks, but he never says where he is or what he's doing. And he never, ever talks about coming home.

I really miss Steve. I'll bet they do, too, but they'd never say so. They're awfully funny people that way.

I guess Phyllis wishes she had a daddy to brag about now.





## A Bestiary About A Paramecium Named Edward

At one rather insignificant time in the history of the universe, there lived (or perhaps more accurately, there marked time) upon this earth a very colorless paramecium named Edward. The other young paramecia would scamper about making new friends, eating and drinking until their digestive vacuoles threatened to burst, having fun, F-U-N; in short, living life to the very hilt. But not young Edward. He would just sit there, sopping up water. No personality — absolutely no personality did Edward have. Or so his contemporaries thought. Each time they passed him on the way to or from some social gathering, they would nudge each other and say, "Ho Ho." They said (and poor Edward heard them, too, I should suspect) "Edward is a dud."

One day an older and wiser paramecium came swimming by and heard their cruel, not to mention nasty, remarks. Was that older and wiser paramecium ever incensed! And so she said, "Listen to me. I have faith in Edward. Just you wait. Someday, he is going to Blossom Out, and that is the day that you will be ashamed that you said, 'Edward is a dud.' It is my guess that Edward is the Reflective Type, who does not have time for the paramecialities of the world."

Then the young paramecia were contrite. They hung their heads and said, "We are humbled in the presence of Edward, a young paramecium of great potential and truly reflective character." Their zeal was so great

that they decided to help Edward reflect. And so they swam around ultra-quietly, doing their best to preserve the atmosphere of reflection for Edward. And Edward just sat there in a drop of water and stared blankly out over his world.

Well, this went on for a reasonable length of time for Edward to do a pretty sizeable amount of reflection. The young paramacia were beginning to be a little tired of waiting for the profundities which were sure to be born of Edward's reflection. Besides, it wasn't easy for these ultra-normal young paramacia to tip toe around (or whatever it is that paramacia do), and to contain their exuberance for a prolonged length of time. They began to mumble among themselves, that they didn't think that Edward was reflecting at all. Well, they called a meeting and decided to approach this problem in a scientific way. That was the first thing they decided, and then it took them two hours to decide how to approach it scientifically. Finally one of them said, "I have it! Let's appoint one person to saunter up to him nonchalantly and ask him some philosophical question. That will be the test of Edward."

"Yes," they all chorused. "*That will be the test.*"

And so it was that one saucy little one swam up to Edward that very day, cleared his throat, assumed a philosophical attitude, and asked soulfully, "How's the world as *you* see it, Edward?"

Edward blushed. He smiled a weak, watery smile and blew his nose. After three false starts, he gathered together all of his courage, took a deep breath, shut his eyes, and said, "Just fine, I guess."

Significance: Edward is one of those Still Waters, who most probably Runs Deep, but then again, he may not.

## GRIEF

*Grief is a deep deep  
thing . . .*

*It grabs your heart  
and grips it,*

*squeezing,*

*tugging,*

*wrenching,*

*until it is exhausted  
from the strain.*

*And yet we must*

*live through it,*

*to stand firm in*

*joy and peace,*

*to love,*

*to go on trying . . .*

*until all grief shall  
cease.*

Jane Howard



# The Great Awakening

BY NANCY BALLARD

So, like dark curtains opening to show a bright stage, the blackness of the night did begin parting to expose the clearness of the new day. The pink-and-blue of the morning was filled with innocentness and quietness, until a shattering noise—that of the tolling of many bells—did suddenly break the silence into sharp pointed splinters and jagged spears. Yea, quietness no longer inhabited the earth, for now the air was filled with a great tumult of noise—even now a noise like unto that of the groanings of many persons filled with great pain.

For lo, it was 7 A. M., and the time that the lords and masters of this great congregation of pupils and serfs had ordained that these subservient ones should rise from their state of reposure, adorn their bodies with garments, and subject once again their minds to the omniscient teachings of their masters.

These knowledge-seeking youths did thus arise from their beds, and lo, their eyes did refuse to stay open and their tongues to loose themselves from their inert positions. Yes, these pupils did seem like unto sleepwalking persons in their movements. Nor did they revive from their trance as they did bathe and clothe their bodies.

Like a great host of the walking dead, this body of knowledge-seekers did assemble and walk through the damp and dark halls of their stone dwelling place to the mead hall wherein were placed great tables laden with quantities of fried boar, bread, and bowls filled with the eggs of the fowls and wild birds of the neighboring forests. Yea, the tables groaned under the weight of the food placed thereon, but those entering gazed not once at this vast display. Nay, nay, for the eyes of these ones were on the earthen pots at the end of each table which contained much hot mead.

With lips that scarcely moved, this host did chant their thanks to their Heavenly Father and their Great Provider and did seat themselves in their appointed places. One of their number did pour a great quantity of the hot mead into mugs placed there, until all seated did hold a cup. Then with one accord did this congregation drink from the cups before them.

And lo, the mead hall was suddenly filled with much talking and laughter, and the pupils and serfs seated therein no longer resembled those from the grave. For their eyes were opened and their tongues loosened, and they did enter into the world of the living again.

Moral: Don't talk to a Wesleyanne before she has had her coffee.



# Incident at Nelson's Point

BY BETTIE WILLSON

When the fourth ship went down in early March the Old Man sent for Tom Haglett. He glared across the desk at his young employee.

"Okay, Tom," he snarled. "Start packing. You're going to Blackwater on the night mail coach."

By sundown he was on his way, the letter of introduction to J. Ballentine, a representative of a shipping firm at Blackwater, North Carolina, tucked into his vest. He stretched his long legs into the empty seat opposite him and leaned his head against the soft upholstery. The flat coastal plain of Massachusetts swept past in the growing twilight and when the darkness descended Tom closed his eyes and began to sort out and classify all he knew about his assignment to Blackwater and the ships connected with it.

Normally the Old Man wouldn't have let one ship's going upset him to this extent, but he had followed the reports of every shipping company on the Massachusetts coast for the past fifteen years and in the last six months he had discovered a pattern. Three other ships—two clippers and a frigate, had gone down off Nelson's Point—all carrying valuable cargo—and not a man had been saved.

In early January he had called Tom into the office and bellowed, "Young man, if one more ship goes down—particularly one of mine—there'll be hell to pay. So, you'd best study these reports. Now, get to it. If there's anything to this hunch of mine, I'll burn out every blasted pirate on the Atlantic coast!"

Tom grinned broadly, thinking of how black the Old Man's temper would be until he sent news back to Bedford. Then his mind shifted to the office at Blackwater and he wondered what Ballentine would be like.

J. Ballentine was a wrinkled old bookkeeper who smelled faintly of printer's ink and goose quilled pens. He peered over the tops of his spectacles and agreed to do all he could to get Tom Haglett to Nelson's Point without fear of discovery.

The little man picked up a goose quill and clipped it expertly with a pen knife. "You can take a horse or go by stage," he said. His deft hands paused and he looked out between his bushy eyebrows and those eyeglasses. "Course," he said slowly, "you could wait for a dark and stormy night and take a clipper out of Georgetown."

"I'd rather go by stage," said Tom, dryly.

"Well," said Ballentine. "If joen 'twas me, I'd get me a good horse and not wait for the stage."

"How so?"



"Well, the weather's bad," he said, with a wave of his hand at the overcast sky. "But the roads are worse. Besides, the stage just left this morning and there won't be another for three days."

Haglett walked over to the window, and resting his palms on the sill, leaned forward and stared for some time at the gray sky.

"Where could I get a good horse?"

The desk creaked and Ballentine sighed. "I've already gotten him for you. He's at Sutton's stable—across from the auction house. Just saddle him and ride out of town." His voice changed suddenly, going soft and calm. "You got a pistol, Haglett?"

"Aye."

"If you need anything, tell the stage driver. He'll get in touch with me."

The two men looked at each other silently and Tom nodded and went out.

The storm caught him five miles south of Nelson's Point, and by the time he arrived at the Red Lion Inn, his great coat was soaked through and his teeth were chattering with cold.

He sat with his long legs stretched toward the fire, his eyes half closed with the comfort of warmth and good rum, seeming oblivious to the two men who stood at the bar of the small room. His attention was divided between their murmurings and the howls of the wind as it drove sleet against the window panes with the force of a hammer. He sighed and looked down at his boots, splattered with gray mud, and for the first time in well over an hour, shifted his position and rose stiffly to his feet. The room creaked with silence. The barkeep, a tall, thin sallow man watched indifferently as Tom crossed the room and when he asked for a candle, handed it to him with some reluctance.

A man lounged at the bar, a mug of hot rum almost hidden between his massive hands and, as Tom turned toward the stairs, the man spoke.

"What be your name?" he asked sullenly.

"Thomas Haglett," he said with an easy smile. "And yours?"

"What be your business here?" the big man asked.

"You must be a fisherman," Tom said without hesitation. "Perhaps you could help me. I've come from New York for my broker's concern to see about establishing a fishing fleet in these waters. As yet, I haven't had a look at the village and, if this rain keeps up, it doesn't look as though I ever will. But if you would be so kind, Mr.—"

"Cornick," the big man said shortly.

"Ah, yes," Tom said with a nod. "If you would be so kind Mr. Cornick, as to show me about the village and give me some information . . ."

"What sort of information?" Cornick asked suspiciously.

"Good evening, gentlemen," the woman's voice cut in softly.

She stood in a doorway that led into the back of the Inn, clutching an oil lamp in both hands. Her oval face was framed in the soft light as she moved toward them.



"Why, Timothy," she reproved the barkeep. "Why didn't you tell me we had a guest?"

Tom looked down into her dark eyes which, in their darkness, hid the meaning behind her words. He bowed.

"Thomas Haglett, at your service, ma'am."

She inclined her dark head. "I'm Mrs. Flagg," she said. "This is Timothy, my brother-in-law. We care for the Red Lion. You must forgive our ill show of manners, Mr. Haglett. We have so few guests here."

For the first time she turned and looked at Cornick. "Good evening, Henry. Isn't it rather late for you to be out. You've got a working day tomorrow."

Henry flushed crimson and, with a mumbled goodnight, turned and left the Inn. A blast of cold air swept through the entrance hall and Tom shivered.

"Your room is this way, sir," the woman said. He followed her lead up the narrow stairs. At the door to his room she said goodnight and went on down the dark, cavernous hall, the oil lamp shedding its soft gleam in her wake.

As Tom blew out the candle and climbed into bed, all he could remember of the beautiful woman's face was the thin, tight line of her lips when she had looked at the man called Henry Cornick.

After an early breakfast in the main room, Tom went down to the edge of the sea to talk to the non-committal fishermen. He tried every device he knew—chatting amiably of the sea and fishing, of tides and sails. They answered his questions politely but, beyond that, they said nothing. He returned to the Inn late in the afternoon knowing no more than he had when he left it early that morning.

As he turned into the Inn yard, he noticed the Blackwater stage standing before the door. The driver sat before the fire in the main room drinking a cup of flip and chattering with Mrs. Flagg. Tom paused in the door, once more struck by her dark loveliness, now enhanced by the folds of her black morning dress. She was laughing at a remark the stage driver had made and when she saw Tom the laughter broke off abruptly.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Haglett," she said.

"Good afternoon. Would it be too much trouble to fetch me a cup of hot rum?"

She rose gracefully. "Of course not, I'll bring it up to your room."

"I'll have it here, thank you," Tom said as he sat down before the fire.

When the woman had gone, he turned to the stage driver. "So you drive the mail coach to Blackwater?" he asked amiably.

"For the last twelve years," the little man piped shrilly.

"I'll be going back with you next trip."



"Well, now, that's fine. I always like havin' company aboard. Like to talk a lot. Hope you're a good listener. Now, you take that Miss Myra there—Mrs. Flagg, that is—I've known her since she was a young girl an' she still listens better 'n any woman I ever run across. Why she lets me sit in here and rattle like an empty wagon every time I drop by. She even lets me tell her about racin' with the clippers."

"Racing with the clippers?" Tom asked in bewilderment.

"Yes, sir," the little man answered. He smiled sheepishly. "It's sort of a fancy of mine. You see, I can spot a clipper from the highway and usually I can outdistance it by half a day. I'm right smart at it. An' Miss Myra—I mean Mrs. Flagg—she bets with me on time. Why, I spotted a good sized clipper leaving Blackwater this morning and I left her behind before I'd gone four miles."

The woman returned with the cup of rum and handed it to Tom.

"What nonsense are you telling now, Charlie?" she asked evenly.

"I was just tellin' the stranger here about mine and your little game. How many ships would you say I've spotted rightly, Miss Myra?"

The woman stood looking out the window. "You'd best be on your way, Charlie," she said. "It's looking ugly out there."

Tom went to the window and watched Charlie climb onto the stage. When he had gone, Tom turned and looked down at the woman. The faint scent of lavender rose from her hair.

"How often does he stop here?" he asked.

"Oh, every two days or so. This is his midmark between Blackwater and Shrove's Inlet." She turned away. "Will you be wanting your dinner, now, Mr. Haglett?"

As tired as he was he could not sleep. He lay in the darkness sick with disappointment over the failure of his day. This was a job that could take months and he could not stay past the day after tomorrow if he didn't want to arouse suspicion. Far in the back of his mind lay the thing that would not let him sleep. He could not remember a remark that had startled him at the time. He could not remember who had said it, either. Who had talked so much? The stage driver! He thought of Charlie and wondered just how much he knew about the sunken ships. Probably nothing. He was just old enough to get pleasure out of outracing a clipper. He sat upright with a start.

*Outracing a clipper!*

"That's it!" Tom cried jubilantly into the darkness. What was it the little man had said? 'She even lets me tell her about racing the clippers.'

Tom's head sunk into his hands. "Oh, my God," he groaned aloud. He drew back the covers and walked to the window. The sea was hidden by the mist. Myra Flagg had the weather on her side, too.

Tom dressed hastily and slipped down the stairs to the main room. In the dark he felt his way to the door nearest the bar, where he had first seen Myra Flagg. The heavy door swung open silently and, closing it



firmly behind him, he lit a candle and held it high above his head. He was in the store room and the casks of rum that lined the walls was all the evidence he needed. He had leaned forward to read the name of the ship written on one of the casks when he heard a step behind him. But before he could turn, his assailant struck expertly and Tom Haglett sagged to his knees and sprawled unconscious on the stone floor.

\* \* \* \*

Henry Cornick was bending over him when he awoke. The big man chuckled unpleasantly. "He's still alive, Myra. He's slept most of the night through."

A light moved and a shadow fell across Tom's face. Myra Flagg stood above him, her cool, dark eyes searching his face. She nodded and turned to Cornick. "I'll get him something hot to eat," she said. The light moved away and he was left alone in the darkness. His hands and feet were bound and he was stiff with cold and soreness. His head whirled and pounded with pain. He tried to think of a way out but his mind would not function properly.

When the woman returned, she shut the door behind her, set a tray on an upturned crate and knelt beside him. She still smelled of lavender. Much to his astonishment, she leaned forward and untied the cords that bound his wrists.

"Don't say a word," she said softly. "Just listen. I've got a pistol under the napkin on that tray. I'm going to give it to you and we'll get out of here. We can go to the authorities at Blackwater and turn in Cornick and the men."

"What men?"

She cut the cords at his ankles and stood up. Tom rose stiffly to his feet and his head was suddenly clear. He looked at her evenly.

"What about your part in all this?"

She looked up at him. "You can fix all that. You can tell them that I didn't know what Cornick was doing with the information that Charlie gave me. Charlie didn't know that Cornick was sinking those clippers. You could make them believe that I didn't know it either—just like Charlie."

He looked at her silently—the black hair and the eyes that told so little and so much and the softness of her mouth.

"Look, Tom," she said and her breathing was rapid. Little dots of perspiration had broken out on her forehead. "I've got the key to this store room. We could lock the door on the inside and smash the window and get away before they knew what had happened." She stepped closer to him and placed her hand on his arm. "You'll do it, won't you, Tom. All you have to do is lock the door."



"Give me the key," he said softly.

She drew a long breath and handed it to him. He turned and locked the massive door, slipping the key into his pocket. Then, he bent down and picked up the pistol and tucked it into his belt. He looked at the woman who stood, calmly victorious, a few feet away.

"Come here, Myra."

He cupped her chin in the palm of his hand and tilted back her head. She smiled and leaned toward him. His left fist came up sharply and connected with the soft curve of her jaw and he caught her as she crumpled.

"That'll hold you for a while," he said quietly. "At least until I get to Blackwater."

It was a pity, he thought later, that Myra Flagg would have to spend the rest of her life in a prison. The rest of her life in a house full of women not half so lovely as she.

## TWILIGHT

*And now the sun is gathering it's last bright rays*

*Unto itself and is slowly descending down the*

*Western sky*

*Into it's nightly home.*

*And there is nothing left but the soft twilight*

*Which follows the golden sunset.*

*Way up in the sky an old gray dove is slowly winging*

*Its way home;*

*Over the church steeple, down through the woods*

*Over the fields so brown, down through the vale*

*And over the brooks so blue, and down through the trees*

*Until she comes to light in an old brown willow*

*By the side of a rustic barn.*

*And there in her little nest concealed by leaves and sprigs*

*She covers her tiny head and sleeps*

*With the thankfulness of God in her heart.*

Mary Exe Ford

# Pontifically Speaking

BY PONT RILEY

"The time has come, the walrus said, to talk of many things — of shoes and ships and sealing wax — of cabbages and kings." Yes, sir, the time has come to talk — or rather to write, and since I can't think of anything lofty or intelligent to write for this issue of the *Wesleyan*, and since I *must* write something, here goes!

Before I begin, though, thank you for your warm response to the last issue. Compliments have been floating in on the gentle breezes, and I have indulged considerably in sniffing at them with delight. Besides, it helps my ego! However — I presume you noticed the title at the top of this page. Well, do you know why it's there? Because, in case you haven't guessed, nobody — rather not nearly enough — has turned in any material, that's why! And didn't I warn you — if you don't write — I'm forced to. I have the name of this fair magazine to uphold, and one of the ways it's upheld is by having something printed on its pages — something worthwhile, that is. This, I realize, isn't really worthwhile, but it's better than nothing at all! Besides, we can't say the *Wesleyan* will pay \$5.00 for all entries — we'd go broke!

Now — sermon's done — where was I? Oh, yes, we were going to talk — or rather I was going to write. Well, well, I'll bet you can't guess what's on my mind this time of year! Christmas — with all the excitement and bustle that only Christmas can have! Of course, I've already had Christmas once this year — August 25th to be exact.

"Yellowstone Christmas comes twice a year,  
Once at home and once up here."

Yes, sir, in Yellowstone last summer, we had Christmas in August with Santa Claus, Christmas trees decorated, party food, and the *Messiah* presented by the choir. The dudes thought we were crazy, but we thought it was delightful! I'm not sure how it all started, but that doesn't matter. What really mattered was that it wasn't the least bit difficult to get the Christmas spirit thousands of miles away from home way up in the Rockies of Wyoming. Of course it's not hard to get into any kind of spirit in Yellowstone — it's so beautiful. Why, even the second principle of thermodynamics can be a subject of vital importance if discussed while watching Old Faithful play by the moonlight!

Anyway, I've rambled enough. I was thinking back, though, of Christmases here at *Wesleyan*. Of course, nobody is here on Christmas day itself, but the bustle of packing to go home only adds to the general excitement.



I don't remember too much about Christmas my Freshman year except three things — the night before we went home my roommate and I stayed up over half the night because we were too excited to sleep; the day we went home was the coldest day of the year — it was 18° at 10:00 in the morning; and we had a Biology Quiz scheduled for that day which Doc did not postpone! Believe me, that amphitheatre was mighty cold, yessir, mighty cold.

Christmas my Sophomore year was a nightmarish sort of thing. About ten days before school was to be out for the holidays, people started "flaking out" with the flu. It was like the Black Death. The Infirmary was packed with corpses, people were dying in the dorms, and those of us who survived kept going because we knew that if we stopped, we'd get it too. That year we got out a week early for Christmas, but those Saturday classes the month of January almost did it again. There was one blessing that year, though — it snowed. We're still talking about it as "the day it snowed!"

Last year was a fairly orderly Christmas. The weather wasn't unusually cold, and we had good health. The banquet was successful, and the music afterwards was mighty fine. It was last Christmas that I went "hog-wild" and bought Christmas records. My two favorites were recordings by Mantovani and the Robert Shaw Chorale. I almost wore them out before Christmas, I played them so much!

Now it's Christmas again — the last one at Wesleyan for many of us. However, don't worry — I'm not one to become tearful and wax nostalgic! There'll be other Christmases — perhaps nicer than the ones we've had at Wesleyan.

Friends — you have deserted me in my hour of need! Nobody has explained Charlye's poetry to me yet. Don't tell me it's because you don't know! ! Surely there's somebody who knows about things like that! Please, whoever you are, won't you come forth — your efforts will be greatly appreciated.

Well, you'd never know it, but this work of outstanding — maybe "outlandish" would be better — literary quality has been written at different times under varied conditions. And now — since the pillow upon which I'm propped has somehow affected the weight of my eyelids, I'd best close. Besides, I need my rest to help me struggle with my many problems — Pharr over my head!

